

News from the

**U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman



For Immediate Release

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***DOZENS OF AMENDMENTS FILED TO BLOCK FIRST BIPARTISAN
HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM BILL IN DECADE, ENZI SAYS***

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today said he is deeply disappointed that dozens of Democratic amendments to the bipartisan small business health plan bill, S.1955, which would give working families better access to affordable health insurance, and relief from rising health care costs, have been filed in an effort to block the bill's passage in a mark up scheduled tomorrow.

“This effort puts the minority’s commitment to expanding health insurance choices for working families in a whole new light. And it disappoints me that some on the HELP Committee are willing to ignore an historic opportunity to move forward a bipartisan bill we’ve spent hundreds of hours negotiating with dozens of groups in the business and health care communities,” Enzi said.

“After a decade of gridlock and no real chance to pass genuine health insurance reform through the Senate, this bill is the only light at the end of the tunnel for small business and working families.” Enzi said the Committee will move forward with the markup despite the effort, adding that working families need to know where every member of the HELP Committee stands on solving the health insurance crisis in our

nation. “I hope we can still have a constructive discussion during tomorrow’s markup,” Enzi added. “But some of my colleagues’ amendments suggest otherwise.”

Ironically, many of the amendments filed to block S.1955 have been written by Senators from states rated among the top-10 most expensive in the nation for family small business policies, including several northeastern states. Among its many reforms, S.1955 would provide relief from price restrictions imposed by many of those same states to control health insurance premiums and effectively raise rates to certain groups of people based upon their health status. Amendments filed include proposals for allow drug importation and some to expand Medicare, Medicaid, and medical research funding, include some revenue-related issues outside the HELP Committee’s jurisdiction.

The bill, “The Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act,” (S.1955) will allow business and trade associations to band their members together and offer group health coverage on a national or statewide basis in direct response to runaway costs that are driving far too many employers and families from comprehensive health insurance. Since 2000, for example, group premiums for family coverage have grown nearly 60 percent, compared to an underlying inflation rate of 9.7 percent over the same period.

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